

**Amendment to the Claims**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listings of Claims**

Claims 1-14 (canceled)

Claim 15 (original): A method of loading wafers into a semiconductor manufacturing apparatus, said method comprising :

placing a wafer cassette on a support member of a load port;

measuring the load exerted by the cassette on the support member, and

determining whether the bottom of the cassette is present at a plurality of spaced-apart sites above the support member;

comparing the measured load to a predetermined value;

issuing a control signal only if the bottom of the cassette is determined to be present at each of said sites, and the measured load exceeds said predetermined value;

and

commanding a robot to transfer wafers from the cassette into a chamber of the manufacturing apparatus in response to the issuing of the command signal.

Claim 16 (original): The method of loading wafers as claimed in 15, wherein said measuring of the load comprises measuring the loads exerted by the cassette at each of said spaced-apart sites.

Claim 17 (original): The method of loading wafers as claimed in 16, wherein said determining whether the bottom of the cassette is present at said plurality of spaced-apart sites comprises comparing the loads measured at said sites to one another.

Claim 18 (original): The method of loading wafers as claimed in claim 17, wherein the control signal is issued only if the loads measured at each of said sites are substantially the same.